



Older Americans constitute a growing and vital segment of America's population. Individuals 65 years of age and older represent 12.7 percent of the U.S. population, or about one in every eight Americans. The Older Americans Act (OAA) was created specifically to ensure equal opportunity for, and preservation of the rights of, our nation's older citizens. The Administration on Aging (AoA) has many programs in place to ensure that the dignity of older people is maintained and that federal, state, and tribal governments work jointly to guarantee protection of these rights.

Legal services are an important component of the OAA. To ensure that legal services are readily available, AoA has awarded grants to establish legal service hotlines in a number of states to provide information to the elderly about these laws. In addition, the Vulnerable Elder Rights Protection Program, established under Title VII of the OAA, provides for protection and enhancement of the basic rights of vulnerable older Americans.

Older Americans have a legal right of access to certain government-funded services and programs. In order to facilitate a better understanding of the many and various laws that protect their rights, AoA has developed this fact sheet, which may be used as a guide to specific laws that protect older Americans. These laws include:

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 (EPA) protects men and women who perform substantially equal work for the same employer from sex-based wage or benefit discrimination. The act applies to all employees who are covered by the Federal Wage and Hour law, which includes virtually everyone. For more information or to report a violation, contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) at 1-800-669-4000 (voice) or 1-800-669-6820 (TTY), or go to the EEOC's website at <http://www.eeoc.gov>.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, was landmark legislation prohibiting discrimination in housing, employment, and education. Of particular importance are these specific provisions:

- **Education.** Title IV of the Act prohibits discrimination in elementary, secondary, and public institutions of higher learning from discriminating based on race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. To file a complaint or to obtain more information, contact: the Education Division of the Department of Justice at 202-514-4092.
- **Federal Assistance.** Title VI of the Act provides that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin under any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance, which includes access to federally funded health care, public assistance, or other social services. Each federal agency that extends financial assistance has the primary responsibility to monitor state responsibilities related to civil rights.

Of special concern to AoA is the fact that minority elders might have difficulties accessing federally funded programs and services simply due to a lack of proficiency in the English language. To address this concern, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13166, which required that each federal agency prepare a plan by December 11, 2000, to improve access to its federally funded programs and activities by persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). To learn more about the LEP initiative and AoA's efforts to better serve minority older individuals, go to AoA's website titled "The Many Faces of Aging: Resources to Effectively Serve Minority Elder Persons." The website address is: <http://www.aoa.gov/minorityaccess>.

- **Equal Employment.** Title VII of the Act protects individuals against employment discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, or religion. Congress established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1964 to enforce, educate, and to provide technical assistance to employers about their Title VII obligations. To contact the EEOC, call 1-800-669-4000 (voice) or 1-800-669-6820 (TTY), or go to the EEOC website at <http://www.eeoc.gov>.



The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) protects individuals over the age of forty from discrimination based on age in the workplace. The Act applies to all private employers with twenty or more employees, state and local governments, federal government, employment agencies, and labor organizations. The EEOC oversees complaints and remedies, although private lawsuits are also allowed under this statute. Contact the EEOC at 1-800-669-4000 (voice) or 1-800-669-6820 (TTY) or go to the EEOC's website at <http://www.eeoc.gov>.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination based on disability in:

- Programs conducted by federal agencies;
- Programs receiving federal financial assistance;
- Federal employment; and
- Employment practices of federal contractors.

Section 501 **of the Rehabilitation Act** requires non-discrimination in employment by federal agencies. For 501 inquiries, employees should contact their agency's Equal Employment Opportunity office.

Section 503 prohibits discrimination by government contractors and their subcontractors. For complaints under this section, call the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Federal Contract Compliance at 202-693-0102 (voice/relay).

Section 504 prohibits discriminating against a qualified individual with a disability from any program or activity that receives federal assistance, or is conducted by an Executive agency or the U.S. Postal Service including exclusion from or denial of benefits. Each federal agency has its own set of section 504 regulations that apply to its own programs. If you have a concern, contact the federal agency that administers the program, or contact the Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights at 1-800-368-1019 (Voice) or 1-800-537-7697 (TDD).

The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 prohibits discrimination based on age in programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. This Act does not cover employment discrimination, which is covered under the ADEA described above. The Age Discrimination Act contains certain exceptions that permit, under limited circumstances, use of age distinctions or factors other than age that may have a disproportionate effect on the basis of age. For more information or to file an age discrimination complaint against a program or activity run by the Department of Health and Human Services, contact the Office for Civil Rights at 1-800-368-1019 (Voice) or 1-800-537-7697 (TDD).

The Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act of 1980 (CIPRA) allows the Attorney General to uncover and correct widespread deficiencies that seriously put at risk the health and safety of residents of institutions, including publicly operated nursing homes. The Act does not authorize the Attorney General to represent individual, institutionalized persons. For more information, contact the U.S. Department of Justice at 202-514-6255 (Voice/Relay).

The Air Carrier Access Act of 1986 prohibits discrimination in air transportation by carriers against qualified people with physical or mental impairments. For more information, call the U.S. Department of Transportation at 202-366-4648 (Voice) or 202-366-8538 (TDD). Complaints may also be addressed by private action in the federal courts.

The Fair Housing Act, as amended in 1988, prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, and national origin. The law covers housing that receives federal financial assistance, state and local government housing, and private housing as well. The Act also makes it unlawful to discriminate when selling or renting a house, providing financing, advertising, designing new construction, or in zoning practices. Complaints of Fair Housing Act violations may be filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-343-3442 (Voice) or (800) 483-2209 (TDD). Violations may also be enforced through private lawsuits.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination based on disability in employment, state and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. The Supreme Court, in their 1999 Olmstead decision, ordered that people with disabilities must be allowed to live in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs, in keeping with the spirit of the ADA. For more information about each area the ADA covers, or to file a complaint, call one of the following:

Employment:	800-669-4000, 800-669-6820 (TDD)
State and Local Government:	800-514-0301, 800-514-0383 (TDD)
Public Transportation:	202-366-1656, 800-877-8339(TDD)
Public Accommodation:	800-514-0301, 800-514-0383 (TDD)
Telecommunications:	202-418-0190

The Civil Rights Act of 1991 authorizes monetary damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination and provides for obtaining attorney's fees and the possibility of jury trials.

Working in close partnership with its sister agencies in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the AoA is the official Federal agency dedicated to policy development, planning and the delivery of supportive home and community-based services to older persons and their caregivers. The AoA works through the national aging network of 57 State Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging, 225 Tribal and Native organizations representing 300 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal organizations, and two organizations serving Native Hawaiians, plus thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers, and volunteers. For more information about the AoA, please contact:

U.S. Administration on Aging	Phone:	(202) 619-0724
Department of Health and Human Services	Fax:	(202) 260-1012
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.	Email:	aoainfo@aoa.gov
Washington, DC 20201	Web:	www.aoa.gov

Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116, Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET